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New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 82 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Hashim (Brunei Darussalam): On behalf of the Brunei delegation, please accept our warmest congratulations, Sir, on becoming Chairman of this Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. I assure you that my delegation will give you their full support and cooperation.

We would like to acknowledge the important achievements made on general disarmament in the past year. In particular, we are encouraged to see the ongoing efforts towards worldwide nuclear disarmament. This should continue to be an area of highest priority to all of us.

There has been substantive progress: for example, the endorsement of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was opened for signing in September last year, and the strengthening of the safeguards of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

This year we have embarked on another new phase in strengthening our efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. I refer to the completion of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We believe that this is underpins the commitment we have made as parties to the NPT. We greatly appreciate the work done by the Chairman and his staff in bringing the session to a successful conclusion. The session, the first of its kind, will certainly set the tone for future deliberations and for the Review Conference itself.

As far as the NPT is concerned, my delegation hopes that efforts to achieve universality will continue, with the goal of bringing in those countries which have yet to accede to the Treaty.

We feel it is important to move forward with efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. To this effect, we welcome the call for the conclusion of a universal and legally binding international agreement committing all States to the elimination of nuclear weapons. My delegation also supports initiatives for a legally binding international instrument to provide unconditional assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States against the use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons. To achieve this, the nuclear-weapon States obviously have the most important part to play. If these efforts can be realized, they would serve to reinforce the commitment of all parties to the NPT.

Efforts by the nuclear-weapon States have not gone unnoticed. My delegation is encouraged by ongoing efforts in nuclear-arms reduction, such as the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START III) between the United States and the Russian Federation. My delegation believes this to be a significant development in disarmament, one that indicates support for those of us who maintain that nuclear weapons need to be immediately eliminated.

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With regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention, my delegation is also encouraged to see that it has entered into force. Brunei Darussalam's accession to the Convention is part of its commitment to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

Brunei Darussalam welcomes regional initiatives as a significant complement to global efforts.

For us in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), our commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament was affirmed in the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Its entry into force last March attests to our commitment to peace and security in our region. In this regard, my delegation would like to call upon all the nuclear powers to strengthen their support for this Treaty by acceding to its Protocol.

My delegation would like to express our continued support for the efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in other areas of the world. In addition, we acknowledge that such initiatives have also taken a different form, whereby individual countries have sought to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone for a single State. We very much welcome this effort. All in all, the establishment of these nuclear-weapon-free zones is a testimony to the determination and genuine aspirations of the peoples of various regions to be free from the threat of nuclear war.

My delegation appreciates the efforts of the Secretary-General in enhancing the efficiency of work in disarmament. We hope this will contribute to the overall work of this Committee in terms of monitoring progress in the implementation of the non-proliferation and disarmament regimes. On this note, we support the current efforts of the Secretary-General to advance the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda.

In conclusion, my delegation and I look forward to another year of progress in the area of disarmament. We certainly hope that the international community will continue to step up its efforts to complete the disarmament process.

Mr. Kanju (Pakistan): Please accept the felicitations, Sir, of the Pakistan delegation on your very well-deserved election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that under your able leadership the Committee will adopt far-reaching decisions to promote the agenda for global disarmament and universal security. May I also express our appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou of Belarus, for the effective manner in which he conducted the Committee's work last year.

The cold war and the accompanying nuclear arms race brought the world close to a nuclear catastrophe. Its end offered a golden opportunity for the international community to construct world peace on the basis of the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Unfortunately, despite the rhetoric about building freedom and democracy, the security structures which are now being constructed promise total security to only a few privileged States while denying most countries even the basic right of self-defence. Such enforced inequality will not be sustainable. Inevitably, the world will move towards multi polarity, hopefully through peaceful revolution but, if this is resisted, through the dialectic of struggle and frequently violent confrontation.

The United Nations Charter envisioned that international peace and security would be built through the harmonization of national policies, the resolution of conflicts and disputes, and the negotiation of agreements to regulate armaments. Collective action to enforce peace was envisaged only in the most extreme circumstances, under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Today, unfortunately, a privileged group of States have assumed the right to determine unilaterally the norms which they seek to apply to all States, while often making exceptions for themselves. We reject the unilateral and unequal regimes which are designed to impose an unequal security order on the smaller and weaker States. The United Nations should not become an instrument for enforcing such inequality.

The United Nations Secretariat must continue to function in accordance with its mandate under the Charter and the decisions adopted by Member States. The present United Nations disarmament machinery was established by the consensus decisions of the first special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament. These structures cannot be unilaterally altered. The United Nations Secretariat should be strengthened to provide adequate support for the work of the Conference on Disarmament and other United Nations conferences engaged in negotiations of disarmament issues, which mostly meet in Geneva.

The Conference on Disarmament has an unmatched record of success, having negotiated the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Biological

Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). These treaties are to be implemented in accordance with their own provisions and not through arbitrarily determined procedures within the United Nations Secretariat.

The fact that the Conference on Disarmament was unable this year to commence negotiations on the preferred priorities of some is not sufficient reason to denigrate its viability or to threaten to discard this valuable negotiating mechanism. Evolving instant conventions in unilaterally convened caucuses is not the most effective way of promoting disarmament.

Although the cold war is over, the threat of global devastation still stalks the world. The two nuclear super-Powers possess over 30,000 nuclear warheads. Pakistan welcomes the prospects for START II ratification and implementation and the commencement of START III, but we would point out that even if the objectives of these negotiations are fully achieved, the two States will still retain over 4000 nuclear weapons between them — more than their nuclear arsenals at the time of the Cuban missile crisis.

The world should be deeply concerned at some of the developments in the nuclear field. These concerns go beyond the danger of horizontal nuclear proliferation and the nightmare scenarios of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists and criminals. These concerns include the following.

Under the euphemistic cover of stockpile stewardship, some nuclear-weapon States are engaged in nuclear testing and research programmes which will enable them to improve and refine their nuclear weapons. This is contrary to the objectives and spirit of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, if not to its letter. It will erode the prospects for the entry into force of the CTBT.

Some new nuclear-weapon designs have been developed with the express purpose of use against underground targets, even in non-nuclear-weapon States. Nuclear weapons are thus no longer solely an instrument of deterrence: war-fighting doctrines now contemplate their actual use.

The provisions against the threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear- weapon States in response to the use or threat of use of other weapons of mass destruction have been contravened by one nuclear- weapon State. This completely negates existing security assurances under Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995), as well as the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Another nuclear-weapon State has disavowed its earlier commitment to the doctrine of no first use of nuclear weapons, some say in reaction to the expansion of military alliances.

The proposed deployment of theatre missile defences and the development of laser weapons against objects in space possess the potential to destabilize the strategic balance and deterrence between the nuclear-weapon States as well as some regions such as South Asia. These developments could indeed lead to the revival of a nuclear arms race, both on the ground and in outer space.

Although there are no great-Power confrontations today, these could re-emerge in new dimensions and directions in future. In a multipolar world, it will become extremely difficult to manage nuclear deterrence. The danger of the use of nuclear weapons by accident or design will multiply.

The international community, therefore, cannot resile from promoting the goal of nuclear disarmament, which has been accorded the highest priority. Nuclear weapons must be banned and eliminated just as chemical and biological weapons have been prohibited. This is the view of the International Court of Justice, the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, the United Nations General Assembly and most eminent experts. This is also the desire of world public opinion.

Pakistan cannot agree that nuclear disarmament is the exclusive concern of two, four or five nuclear-weapon States. If this were so the CTBT and the fissile materials cut-off treaty would not have been proposed for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. If, as is asserted, 20 countries possess the capability to build nuclear weapons, it is not reasonable or even wise to exclude them from nuclear disarmament negotiations.

Pakistan therefore urges the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on nuclear disarmament in early 1998. A group of 26 States, including Pakistan, have proposed a comprehensive mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament which includes negotiations on the following topics.

The first step is a universal and legally binding multilateral agreement committing all States to the

objectives of complete elimination of nuclear weapons — the central recommendation of the International Court of Justice and the Canberra Commission.

The second element is an agreement on further steps required in a phased programme with time-frames leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. A group of 28 countries, including Pakistan, have proposed a draft programme in document CD/1419.

The third element is a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices, taking into account the report of the Special Coordinator Ambassador Shannon, in document CD/1299 and the views related to the scope of the treaty.

Pakistan is prepared to commence work on the fissile materials cut-off treaty. Obviously, this treaty will be acceptable to my country only if it contributes to our security. It will not do so if it does not address the problems created by unequal stockpiles of fissile materials.

Pakistan fully endorses the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We welcome its entry into force. The implementation of the CWC in a fair and objective manner can contribute to the promotion of international security. The Indian declaration that it possesses chemical weapons came as a rude surprise to Pakistan, since we had signed a bilateral declaration in 1992 affirming that neither India or Pakistan possessed chemical weapons. To discover now that the Indian declaration was untrue has placed Pakistan in a quandary. Under the CWC, India will continue to hold stocks of chemical weapons for 10 years. Pakistan must consider what defensive capabilities it requires against these weapons, as long as India continues to hold chemical weapons stocks. Furthermore, we must now seriously question all of India's declarations, including those relating to the non-development of nuclear weapons.

Pakistan has participated actively in the negotiations to elaborate an effective verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention. This is a complex undertaking. The negotiations cannot be accelerated by arbitrary deadlines.

Pakistan also attaches importance to the promotion of conventional arms-control at the global and regional levels. The approach towards conventional weapons pursued so far — that is, transparency and restraints on arms transfers — is inadequate. It could exacerbate imbalances in various regions and erode the security of smaller States that do not have the capacity for indigenous arms production. The inability of the Committee of Experts to agree on enlarging the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a reflection of the complexity of the issues involved.

Pakistan believes that a comprehensive approach should be promoted at the global and regional levels for the control and reduction of conventional weapons. This endeavour should consist of at least three components.

First, we need to mobilize efforts to reverse the growing and unequal concentration of sophisticated and increasingly lethal conventional weapons in the hands of only a few advanced States. This process is widening the inequality on security between the developed and the developing countries. An effort to control the proliferation of new and increasingly lethal conventional weapons should be the focus of global discussions and future negotiations. We suggest this issue should be urgently addressed in the Disarmament Commission.

Secondly, a conscious endeavour is required to ensure against the creation of serious arms imbalances in sensitive regions of the world. This can happen if some regional States resort to large acquisitions or production of armaments, while others in the region are denied the ability to match such acquisitions. Such an imbalance will heighten the insecurity of smaller States. It could encourage aggression against weaker States. It could also create compulsions towards the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. As approved by the General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament should expeditiously formulate a framework for conventional disarmament and arms control at the regional and subregional levels. This would be a first step towards building structures of stability based on equal security in various regions of the world.

Thirdly, a number of conflicts and disputes, among and within States, are currently being exacerbated by the illegal transfer of arms, including small arms. There is a need to restrain such transfers, especially if the arms can fall into the hands of terrorists and criminals. But such concerns cannot be used to deny smaller States the ability to exercise their right to self-defence, nor to crush the legitimate struggle of peoples for self-determination against colonial or foreign occupation. We are therefore concerned at some ill-advised proposals, such as those that seek to confer undefined responsibility on the United Nations Secretariat to address such complex problems without a mandate from the Member States.

Having lived through the long conflict in Afghanistan, Pakistan shares the world community's abhorrence at the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines. I can say with pride that in all conflicts involving Pakistan, our armed forces have used landmines in strict conformity with the rules of international humanitarian law. We were an original party to the Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) and participated actively and supported its revised Protocol II. We have no quarrel with those States that believe that they are in a position to accept a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines. Pakistan participated in the Ottawa process as an observer to underline our sympathy with the world community's humanitarian concerns regarding anti-personnel landmines. However, we have made no secret of the fact that our legitimate security concerns and the requirements for self-defence along our long frontiers do not permit Pakistan to accept a total ban on anti-personnel landmines at this time. There are a number of other States, large and small, that are in the same position. It is obvious that these States will not be able to endorse a call for the universalization of the treaty that is to be signed in Ottawa.

Since this treaty is unlikely to achieve universalization in the near future, the question arises as to the best means for ameliorating and eliminating the danger and suffering created by anti-personnel landmines. In our view, the international community should pursue three objectives. First, we must secure the widest possible adherence to the revised Protocol II of the CCW. In this context, we hope that the more than 90 States that supported the Ottawa treaty will also be able to adhere to Protocol II. Implementation of this Protocol will remove most of the concerns relating to the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines and the suffering caused thereby.

Secondly, we must mount a reinvigorated programme for the elimination of the estimated 100 million landmines that were indiscriminately laid in the past and that are responsible for the 25,000 people killed by landmines each year. The removal of a single landmine costs between $300 and $1,000. A global demining campaign requires a commitment of more than token resources by States wishing to respond to the concerns of public opinion. Perhaps the General Assembly should consider creating a global demining fund, which, we hope, could attract generous contributions in cash or kind.

Thirdly, we should explore the possibility of substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament next year to advance the goal of eventually eliminating anti-personnel landmines through a phased process. Pakistan was the first to propose, in January 1997, the appointment by the Conference on Disarmament of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. We commend the efforts of Ambassador John Campbell of Australia. We hope to see a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines resume and quickly conclude his efforts to develop an agreed mandate for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on anti-personnel landmines.

Pakistan's approach to disarmament is obviously determined by our challenging security environment. For 50 long years, we have had a conflictual relationship with our eastern neighbour, arising from the Kashmir dispute and our neighbour's great-Power ambitions. Today, we face a six-year-old brutal conflict within occupied Kashmir between the freedom movement and over 600,000 troops in the occupation forces; the deployment by our neighbour along our border of an army of 1.2 million men and over 500 aircraft, with frequent exchanges of fire along the Line of Control in Kashmir and a military stand-off on the Siachen glacier; and the production and deployment of the short-range and nuclear-capable Prithvi missile which targets our major cities, sensitive installations and defence assets. This has created a hair-trigger security environment.

We face also the announced acquisition by our neighbour of billions of dollars of armaments, including the most advanced aircraft and soon anti-missile systems, which could erode Pakistan's deterrence capabilities; and the planned development of the medium-range Agni and perhaps longer-range missile systems, which would threaten not only Pakistan but the entire region.

Meanwhile, Pakistan faces unjust embargoes, formal and informal, on acquiring the means to respond to the ongoing arms escalation by our neighbour. In this context, I wish to express our appreciation to our time-tested friend, the People's Republic of China, for its cooperation in accordance with its principled and independent policy.

Since the "Smiling Buddha" was exploded in May 1974, Pakistan has actively sought to promote a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia even though we have been subjected to discriminatory restrictions and penalties. We have exercised considerable self-restraint, and this is very well known. This restraint is our own. We have assumed no commitments. We strongly oppose interference that impedes our legitimate cooperation with friendly States. We denounce arbitrary interventions designed to erode Pakistan's ability to ensure its security and deter aggression.

As the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, stated before the General Assembly on 22 September,

> "Pakistan strives for peace and stability in its region." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 6th meeting, p. 9]

We have taken the initiative to resume the stalled dialogue with India. Pakistan believes that we can succeed in realizing peace through a comprehensive and sustained dialogue which would seriously address, and progressively resolve, the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions; achieve mutual and equitable restraint on conventional weapons to ensure equal security to both Pakistan and India; evolve agreement for mutual and equal restraint in the nuclear field and in ballistic missiles: and conclude and strengthen confidence-building measures. This comprehensive process could be realized and reflected in a treaty of nonaggression between Pakistan and India.

While agreement has been reached on a comprehensive agenda for our dialogue, India is resisting genuine negotiations on Kashmir. It has not responded to our arms-control proposals. Instead, it announced the serial production of the Prithvi and huge new arms purchases and programmes.

The international community must continue to encourage and support the success of a comprehensive bilateral dialogue between Pakistan and India on all the issues on the agreed agenda, including Kashmir. This is essential to preserve international peace and security, promote non-proliferation and disarmament, and ensure that the peoples of South Asia will at last enjoy peace and prosperity.

Mrs. Ray (India): Allow me to extend to you, Sir, our congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. My delegation is confident that the deliberations of the First Committee will proceed smoothly and successfully under your guidance. May I also assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in our common endeavour.

We have to accept the fact that this year the Conference on Disarmament has remained deadlocked. A careful reading of the 1997 report of the Conference on Disarmament will show anyone why and on what issue there was an impasse in the Conference. The reason why consensus on the objectives and the agenda for the fourth special session of the Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) eluded the Disarmament Commission this year was the same — the issue of nuclear disarmament. However, there was some forward movement outside the Conference on Disarmament on other issues. Progress has been registered in the field of chemical and biological weapons, and some useful work has also been done in the area of conventional weapons.

India takes satisfaction in being an original State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force in April this year. It is our belief that by agreeing to this unique disarmament treaty, the international community gives evidence of its serious commitment to laying the foundations for a new global security framework that is based on goodwill, understanding and cooperation. This is consistent with India's position in favour of the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction on the basis of multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory agreements. We have noted the statements made before the first meeting of the States parties by President Yeltsin and the Russian Duma and look forward to the positive results.

We remain conscious, however, that the Convention has not attracted universal adherence and that not all possessors of chemical weapons have ratified it as yet. We believe it important that all possessors of chemical weapons should ratify the Convention without further delay.

India is also a State party to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). This year we have provided information and data to the Secretary-General, in conformity with the standardized procedure agreed to at the Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention, as confidence-building measures. We can feel reasonably satisfied with the progress being registered by the Ad Hoc Group, which is working on measures to strengthen the implementation of the BTWC. The Ad Hoc Group has now moved into a negotiating mode, and the rolling text has started taking shape. We are conscious of the complexity of negotiations ahead. We believe that we must pursue these negotiations vigorously and ensure that they are not cut short through artificially imposed deadlines. We have no difficulties in setting reasonable targets, but we are opposed to artificial deadlines. It is our view that these negotiations should yield a strengthened BTWC which will not only ensure the effective elimination of yet another class of weapons of mass destruction but also facilitate the transfer and exchange of biotechnology for peaceful purposes.

As a State party to both the BTWC and CWC, we acknowledge the necessity and importance of regulating

transfers of dual-use technology in order to ensure that they are put to use for peaceful purposes only and not diverted for military use. It is for this reason that we agreed in the CWC to a strict verification regime and are working on putting in place effective measures to strengthen the implementation of the BTWC. The continuation of export controls through exclusive clubs in parallel with the Convention calls into question the exercise being undertaken by the Ad Hoc Group and the effectiveness of the CWC. We believe that such controls should be multilaterally negotiated by the States parties.

The strengthening process of the BTWC provides an opportunity which must be seized to create a non-discriminatory, transparent and cooperative regime. The strengthening of article III and the full implementation of article X of the BTWC should result in promoting the peaceful use of technology and at the same time ensuring that it is not used for military applications. This will enhance confidence in the Convention and lead to the universalization of its membership. We will be presenting a draft resolution on the role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament and hope to deal with this issue in that draft resolution.

While we believe that considerable progress has been, or is being, registered in the areas of chemical and biological weapons, we have still with us the most recalcitrant of issues the issue of nuclear weapons. We welcome the efforts being made bilaterally by the United States of America and Russia for a reduction in their arsenals. However, we remain acutely conscious of the fragility of this bilateral process, which depends heavily on the situation in, and relations between, these two nuclear-weapon States. We believe that these efforts need to be based in a framework which would lead to the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Our proposal for a time-bound, phased programme does not seek to impede this bilateral process. It is not an all-or-nothing approach, as some critics have characterized it. It aims at focusing attention on ensuring that all nuclear-weapon States, and all other States, become bound to the elimination of nuclear weapons. This is why we have supported the call for a legally binding commitment by all States to the elimination of nuclear weapons. That would be the first step in building confidence. We have not only supported the call for such a commitment but have also proposed the adoption of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

We have dealt with the two other weapons of mass destruction through two comprehensive conventions which govern all aspects of those weapons. It is only logical that a similar third convention should be negotiated for nuclear weapons. Why, then, are we encountering difficulties? The reasons are not far to seek. They emanate from the different approach — the unequal and discriminatory route — that was followed with regard to nuclear weapons. Through the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the nuclear-weapon States have perpetuated their retention of nuclear weapons and, having achieved this, have become more insistent on standalone treaties rather than a comprehensive approach. Mere non-proliferation treaties have been promoted as disarmament measures to serve this nuclear monopoly and to perpetuate inequality.

Our apprehensions on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was opened for signature last year, are coming true. We see the loopholes in the CTBT being exploited by some countries even before the ink has dried. Nuclear testing is continuing using non-explosive techniques; existing weapons are being improved; new types of weapons are being designed: all indications that CTBT is set to start a new technology race in the quest for more innovative and more lethal nuclear weapons. In our view, any prohibition of the production of fissile material should, in turn, bring about a halt in the manufacture of nuclear weapons and contribute to their progressive elimination. Any treaty dealing with fissile materials — whether it includes tritium, the cut-off of new production, transfers, or the declaration and control of weaponized and non-weaponized stockpiles — will be a meaningful step only if it is part and parcel of a phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time.

The unequal nuclear regime seems to provide a sense of security to those who possess nuclear weapons and to those under the nuclear umbrella. But the continued retention of nuclear weapons by a few who insist that they are essential to their security and to that of their allies while denying the same right to others is an inherently unstable situation. History has taught us that security based on such unjust, discriminatory principles has never lasted long, and peace based on such foundations has always been precarious. The post-cold-war era provides us with an opportunity to lay the foundations for a durable peace based on just and equitable principles. The elimination of nuclear weapons is a goal shared by all. Partial measures promoted as disarmament measures deflect our attention from the real issue of the elimination of nuclear weapons. It has become

clear that the only way we can achieve this is through a programme of action for elimination within a time-bound framework. This is what the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement — the majority of the United Nations membership — called for at Cartagena. This is what international non-governmental organizations such as the Pugwash Council have pointed out. This is what last year's advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice demands: the opinion is unequivocal that negotiations must begin and conclude, and that the process must not be open-ended, but finite and time-bound.

This year, a number of international non-governmental organizations have launched an initiative for a nuclear weapons convention. Such demands are bound to gain momentum. Global opinion and the international community want a nuclear weapons convention which, like the conventions on the two other types of weapons of mass destruction, would ban the development, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and ensure their destruction in a comprehensive manner.

We are conscious that the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world cannot be achieved without the cooperation of those who have nuclear weapons. Many distinguished voices in those States have in recent months highlighted the diminishing utility of nuclear weapons and the need to do away with them in order to prevent accidents, proliferation and the possibility of these weapons falling into the hands of non-State entities. It is our hope that the nuclear-weapon States will accept that the total elimination of nuclear weapons, based on a stringent verification regime, would serve the interest of humankind.

As Prime Minister I.K. Gujral recently stated, "a nuclear-weapon-free planet is an article of faith" for India. We are convinced that the elimination of nuclear weapons will enhance the security of all States and that it can be achieved through a comprehensive, nondiscriminatory, universal approach. Last year, along with other non-aligned and other developing countries, we submitted a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons. This year, India was one of 26 non-aligned and other developing countries to present in the Conference on Disarmament a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to begin negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time. We will continue to work on this issue with all like-minded countries in the General Assembly and in the Conference on Disarmament.

This year, the Disarmament Commission has been working on the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones, where new concepts such as single-State zones, a whole hemisphere free of nuclear weapons and a nuclear-weapon-free outer space have been put forward. An analysis of these concepts and a comparative study of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones would be a useful and informative exercise. We do not see nuclear-weapon-free zones as an answer to the threats posed by nuclear weapons. Given the global reach and deployment of nuclear weapons, these zones can at best provide an illusion of security against weapons whose effects do not respect territorial or regional boundaries. We, however, respect the right of every country to safeguard its security in a manner in which it deems appropriate, and we therefore respect arrangements that are freely arrived at by the countries of a particular region and that are in keeping with the guidelines endorsed by the United Nations.

The issue of landmines has attracted increasing attention within the international community because of the suffering they have caused to civilian populations. India remains committed to the objective of a non-discriminatory and universal ban on anti-personnel mines. Last year, we voted in favour of resolution 51/45 S, on an international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines.

This year, we have watched the so-called Ottawa process with interest. While we continue to share the objective of banning anti-personnel landmines, we have reservations on the convention that has emerged from the Oslo meeting. We believe that the objective can be achieved in a meaningful way through a phased approach that would enjoy international consensus, and by addressing humanitarian concerns and the legitimate defence requirements of States. We could perhaps start with a ban on transfers. This is motivated by the knowledge that the landmines which are causing devastation to civilian populations around the world today are not produced in the areas where the devastation is taking place, but have been transferred there. The present export moratoriums would be made universal. This could be followed with a ban on the use of landmines in non-international armed conflicts: conflicts of the kind in which the landmine crises has caused death and devastation among civilians.

These moves could be complemented by a ban on the use of remotely delivered mines, since these mines are by their very nature difficult to map, demarcate and fence in and hence pose a very real danger to civilian life. This would narrow the field, as it were, to a situation in which landmines were used only for the defence of borders, a

situation which could be finally dealt with as appropriate military solutions are found. The basis of this phased approach would be seen as confidence-building, enabling States to deal urgently with the humanitarian crisis while remaining sensitive to their legitimate security needs. We remain flexible on the issue of a forum for negotiations and believe that the availability of non-lethal technologies to perform the legitimate defensive role of landmines will help accelerate their complete elimination. The international community should also effectively address the critical issue of mine clearance and dedicate greater efforts and assistance to affected areas.

This year some useful work has been done in the area of conventional weapons. The Disarmament Commission has begun to develop guidelines on conventional arms control, arms limitation and disarmament. We are of the view that these global guidelines should cover the international arms trade. We have before us the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which has come up with recommendations which deserve our careful consideration. We are particularly concerned at the continuing transfer of small arms and light weapons, especially where illicit trade in such weapons leads to their diversion to non-State entities, fuelling strife and terrorism. Such illicit traffic in small arms can have a disproportionately large negative impact, particularly on the internal stability and socio-economic development of the States affected. International cooperation in curbing small-arms traffic will be an important factor in combating this phenomenon. We agree that there is a need to regulate and control the production and flow of such weapons. Greater transparency and accountability in manufacture and transfer may go some way towards curbing their menace.

We believe that greater transparency in arms transfers generates confidence and should be encouraged. The establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important step in that direction. India has regularly provided information to the Register since its inception. This year we have the benefit of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We should continue to encourage greater participation so that the Register can become a truly global institution with universal membership. This will help it realize its full potential as a genuine confidence-building measure.

Before concluding, I would like to refer briefly to the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and his reform proposals relating to disarmament. We believe that the reforms in the Secretariat should improve the implementation of the priorities and mandates given it by the international community for the common benefit of all States. The Secretariat should continue to possess the capacity to fulfil its principal responsibility to implement the decisions taken by Member States and avoid any duplication of activities with treaty mechanisms which oversee compliance with international agreements. Our detailed position on this issue will be put forward in the General Assembly, where it is under consideration.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that we have important tasks to perform in the field of disarmament and international security. The journey is long. We cannot afford to sit idle. It appears that we have reached a stage where it is necessary to reflect and to see whether we in fact address the problems that concern all of us or merely find items to promote one particular approach, one particular set of priorities. Action in the field of disarmament can be successful only if there is a willingness to take into account the security interests of all States, if there is flexibility in approach and a willingness to address, on an equal basis, the problems which face the entire international community. Our efforts should therefore be devoted to identifying areas of common agreement and enlarging those areas. And it is with such an attitude and approach that we address the issue of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which should, while preserving the achievements of the first special session devoted to disarmament, strive to build upon the consensus already achieved.

Mr. Jayanama (Thailand): On behalf of the delegation of Thailand, I should like to extend our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, upon your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that under your able guidance the deliberations of this important Committee will be brought to a successful conclusion. Please be assured of our delegation's full support and cooperation in all your endeavors in the service of international peace and security.

Thailand is fully committed to and supportive of multilateral efforts towards disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament. We are of the view that in the post-cold-war era, conditions that might have lent a certain justification to the concepts of nuclear deterrence and nuclear-arms races no longer exist. Unfortunately, we still have to live with the legacy of this bygone era in the form of global nuclear arsenals. Our position on this matter has always been clear: the existence of nuclear weapons is unnecessary and unacceptable. Thailand firmly believes that

we must go beyond the concept of nuclear non-proliferation and work together towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, preferably within a definite time-frame. It is gratifying that our aspiration to a world without nuclear threats, which is also reflected by international public opinion, was given strong support from the International Court of Justice in the form of the Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons.

In this light, it is imperative that the nuclear-weapon States fulfil their obligation under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at an early date. It is also imperative that they adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and stop nuclear testing and new research to develop further nuclear-weapon technology. As we see it, the fulfilment of obligations by States parties under both the NPT and the CTBT would be an important step towards stopping both vertical and horizontal nuclear proliferation. However, in order to render those Treaties more effective, it is essential that the transfer of related technology for peaceful use, under article IV of the NPT, must be properly considered and translated into reality. This will take the wind out of the sails of the so-called threshold States and give heart to the States who believe in nuclear energy for peace. No States could then cite necessity as a reason for testing or proliferation.

As a complement to the NPT in words and in spirit, Thailand is pleased to announce that on 27 March 1997 the Bangkok Treaty establishing South-East Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone entered into force. This Treaty clearly represents the firm desire and unfaltering commitment of all 10 South-East Asian nations to keep the region free from nuclear weapons. We urge the nuclear-weapon States to join our efforts by signing the Protocol to the Treaty.

My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the States parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which celebrated the Treaty's thirtieth anniversary earlier this year. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, as well as the intention expressed by the Central Asian countries to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region, demonstrates the shared will of the majority of humanity to achieve a nuclear-free world. As a step towards that ultimate goal, it is Thailand's hope to see the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas free of nuclear weapons.

The world witnessed a milestone event in the history of disarmament on 29 April of this year when the Convention on the Prohibition of the Developm Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons on Their Destruction (CWC), the first multilate negotiated agreement that prohibits an entire categor weapons of mass destruction in a verifiable manner, ent into force. Thailand is proud to be one of the 167 signa States of the CWC. We are currently going through legislative process with a view to ratifying the Conve as soon as possible. Meanwhile, we are committed to spirit and objectives of the Convention and stand read render our full support and cooperation to the Organiza for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPC especially in the implementation of the verification inspection regime stipulated by the CWC.

It is also our wish that the other internati Convention governing another kind of weapon of destruction — namely, the Convention on the Prohibitio the Development, Production and Stockpiling Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and Their Destruction (BWC), follow the path of the CW the near future. We would like to see the establishme similar verification measures for biological weapon well.

For this purpose, Thailand has been participatin the endeavors of the ad hoc group of States partie improve the Biological Weapons Convention in orde draw up the verification protocol to the Convention. believe that such a verification mechanism, if universally and without discrimination, would immen strengthen the BWC.

Apart from disarmament efforts aimed at weapon mass destruction, Thailand also attaches importance to regulation and control of conventional weapons. Theref we support resolutions relating to the curb of il international transfers of arms, and we welcome any ef to implement these resolutions. In this regard, please a me to reiterate our continued support for the Un Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Thai appreciates the contribution that the Register has mad promoting transparency in armaments and in buil confidence and trust among States, thus enhan international and regional peace and stability.

As one of the mine-affected countries which nei manufacture nor export anti-personnel landmines, Thai welcomes and supports all efforts to alleviate this gl problem. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs recently st in the General Assembly,

> "We believe that there is no greater crime than maiming or killing innocent civilians. It is high time that we put an end to this." [*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 16th meeting, p. 14]

Therefore, Thailand is fully supportive of any multilateral approaches to realizing a world free of landmines. However, attempts should not be confined only to the banning and destruction of landmines. The international community must address other equally important issues as well, namely, the financial and technical assistance in demining to mine-affected countries and humanitarian assistance to victims of landmines.

We were gratified to see the positive outcome of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, in which we participated as an observer. The Conference was a crucial step towards achieving the total elimination of landmines. We hope that by the end of the year we can join other countries in signing the historic and, hopefully, universal Convention in Ottawa.

In this connection, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Ms. Jody Williams, its Coordinator, for being deservedly awarded this year's Nobel Prize for Peace. This is yet another fine example underlining the important contributions of international civil society and non-governmental organizations to disarmament efforts. Our tribute also goes to the late Diana, Princess of Wales, for her noble role in bringing the plight of the victims of landmines to the attention of the international community.

We note with dismay that the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament is yet to be convened, and that the 1997 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission failed to agree on the agenda and the specific date for the special session. Thailand would like to urge all parties concerned to adhere to the spirit of cooperation and to try to reach an agreement, with a view to convening that important session at the earliest possible date.

We have discussed many topics concerning arms control and disarmament, but without a system or mechanisms to carry out actions, such discussions would be but empty and hollow talk. It is with this notion that Thailand has studied with great interest the Secretary-General's proposal to upgrade the Centre for Disarmament Affairs to a new Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. We welcome the Secretary-General's much-needed efforts to strengthen the United Nations capacity to handle challenges in disarmament issues, and we are pleased to note that nuclear disarmament will continue to be the priority of this new Department, so that the flow of conventional weapons into conflict areas will be targeted.

I would also like to take this opportunity to applaud the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. We have found the "Kathmandu process" and other activities of the Centre to be useful and beneficial for disarmament and confidence-building efforts in our region. Thailand will continue to participate actively in the Centre's programmes and projects.

Before concluding, may I offer the Committee some food for thought. We are discussing here the means of dealing with an agent of death and disability — that is, weapons — and generally the users of weapons are blamed. However, in our discussions concerning another agent of death and disability namely — narcotic drugs — it is generally the producers, and not the end-users, who are blamed for the problem. Might it not be logical to put some of the blame on producers of weapons as well in our disarmament discussions?

For over half a century humanity has lived under constant fear of thermonuclear peril. Only recently, after the end of the cold war, has it become possible for us to rid ourselves of such threats. It is therefore our common task and responsibility to seize this historic opportunity, provided by the present international environment, to work together for the total elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and for the regulation and control of other conventional tools of killing. This task belongs to each and every one of us here. We owe it to ourselves and our children to act — and to act now — in order to realize a vision of a human race at peace with itself.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal): Please accept my delegation's warmest congratulations, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I also wish to congratulate other members of the Bureau on their well-deserved election.

It is encouraging to note that in the past few years the international community has witnessed remarkable progress in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has been extended indefinitely. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been adopted. This year, the Convention on the Prohibition

of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) has come into force. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) is being strengthened. Progress in bilateral nuclear disarmament and arms reduction, too, is encouraging. The international community, likewise, continues to remain committed to the goal of stopping the production, stockpiling, use and transfer of conventional weapons, such as anti-personnel landmines. Attempts to stem the proliferation of small arms are also gaining momentum. We have also been seeing considerable headway towards the creation, expansion and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in many regions of the world.

Indeed, these developments represent significant progress towards non-proliferation, disarmament and arms regulation. Yet they do not by themselves result in the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Sustained pursuit of negotiation, bilateral and multilateral, is indispensable in order to achieve the goal of genuine and complete disarmament, as well as to completely eliminate the massive stockpiles of existing nuclear arsenals.

In the general debate in the First Committee last year, Nepal said that the CTBT was not an end in itself, and that the post-CTBT period should be one of enhanced responsibility on the part of the nuclear-weapon Powers, to translate into reality the Treaty commitments they had made under article VI of the NPT. We stressed the need to start negotiations immediately in the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons in a reasonable, agreed time-frame. We said so because the success of the international community in concluding the CWC and the CTBT had reinforced our belief that, given the will and commitment, there was every reason to hope that a treaty on the elimination of nuclear weapons could be agreed upon. Today, when we see an ever-increasing number of nations, non-governmental organizations, diplomats, jurists, philosophers, academicians, politicians and former military leaders making a fervent plea for nuclear disarmament, our conviction deepens more than ever that the conclusion of a treaty on the time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons is not only a legitimate demand, but also one that is achievable.

For us disarmament — particularly nuclear disarmament — means nothing if it does not provide security to nations and peoples. It is in this spirit that Nepal has supported the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons through phases, over a period of time, advanced by 28 Non-Aligned Movement and neutral countries that are members of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is regrettable that the current momentum in the disarmament process has been severely impeded because of fundamental disagreements over the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament. We urge all Conference on Disarmament members to adopt a flexible and accommodating attitude so as to quickly reach agreement on the programme of work. Rigid positions, in our view, would lead to further deadlock and thereby seriously undermine the role of the Conference on Disarmament. Nepal, like others, continues to attach fundamental importance to the work of the Conference on Disarmament because it is the principal negotiating forum for global disarmament, including nuclear disarmament. We think it is imperative that the Conference on Disarmament surmount its current stalemate and move forward decisively on nuclear disarmament and a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The issue of weapons of mass destruction remains truly paramount. Yet the international community will be seen wanting if it fails to take into account the acute problem of conventional weapons, particularly anti-personnel landmines. Although these categories of weapons may not have the same destructive power as nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, they possess the power of indiscriminate killing. They have taken an enormous human and material toll around the world. It is this humanitarian dimension that moved us in previous years to join the international call for a global ban on these categories of weapons. It is for this reason that the Foreign Minister of Nepal, addressing the General Assembly last month, not only welcomed the agreement reached in Oslo last month on the text of a Convention for the total ban on anti-personnel landmines, but also stated that Nepal would consider signing the Convention in Ottawa in December. He added that landmines should not be allowed to be used indiscriminately, maiming and killing innocent people, including women and children.

We also believe that even as international efforts to achieve a total ban on anti-personnel landmines continue, the international community must provide support and assistance to the demining efforts of the United Nations and other international organizations. Assistance for victims of landmines and the development of technology for mine detection and clearance should also be the concern of the international community. In this respect, Nepal appreciates the significant role played by the United Nations, particularly in mine clearance and mine awareness. For our

part, we have always endeavoured to include an element of demining expertise in the Nepalese troop contingents serving in United Nations peace-keeping operations.

Small arms are yet another issue in the field of conventional weapons that should continue to command the attention of the international community. They are readily available and easy to use, and as such have been the primary tools of violence in sporadic killings, gang warfare and terror and drug-related crimes all over the world. Moreover, they have been the primary tools of violence in most of the recent regional conflicts. The absence of any agreed global norms or standards on the control of such arms has further worsened the situation. It is in this context that Nepal welcomes the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, one of whose sessions was held in Kathmandu this year, which has laid the foundation for future United Nations action in this area. Its recommendations for the reduction of such weapons already in circulation and for the control of future accumulations are welcome to my delegation. Recommendations, particularly those related to peace-keeping mandates and the destruction of such weapons as part of post-conflict peace-building, merit great appreciation. We hope that this Committee will unanimously endorse the Panel's report, thereby launching a practical and effective measure of disarmament in small arms.

The role of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has proved valuable in promoting confidence-building and transparency in armaments. My delegation, as a continuing participant, extends its support to the Register and urges other countries which have not done so to participate.

The arms race is fuelled by a lack of trust among nations. Confidence-building measures and regular dialogue in informal settings represent an indispensable element in the long and arduous efforts for the attainment of disarmament and security. My delegation is pleased to note that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, located in Kathmandu, has been serving that very purpose well.

The Kathmandu Centre marks its tenth anniversary next year. Throughout the past decade the Centre has been actively fostering a climate of cooperation, security and disarmament in the region. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to those Member States that have been giving their unremitting support to the Centre for the promotion of disarmament and security in the region.

Nepal feels that the United Nations has to play an even more important role in responding to the new and evolving security and disarmament challenges. It is in this context that Nepal warmly welcomes and supports in principle the proposal by the Secretary-General, contained in his report on the reform of the United Nations, to constitute a new Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation.

Mr. Edwards (Marshall Islands): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to offer you our sincere congratulations on your well-deserved election; we look forward to working with you during this session. We also extend warm congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, who are all well-known to us as skilled and competent representatives.

Nuclear disarmament is important to the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Between 1946 and 1957 it was the site of 67 nuclear-weapon tests conducted by the Administering Authority during the period of the United Nations Trusteeship of the Pacific Islands. The bombs tested had a total yield of 108,496 kilotons, or over 7,000 times the yield of the atomic weapons used during the Second World War. The Marshallese people have made great sacrifices for international peace and security. Since our admission to the United Nations in 1991 we have voiced our deep concerns regarding nuclear weapons in this Committee and in other forums of the Organization. In this regard, the United Nations has an important role to play. We are encouraged that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is in the process of conducting a survey in the northern areas of the Marshall Islands, and we look forward to its report.

In relation to the good work of the Committee in the context of the maintenance of peace and international security there are some subjects that I wish to briefly comment on.

It is only a little more than a year since the General Assembly took action to adopt and open for signature the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My delegation would like to take this opportunity to echo the sentiments expressed by others during the debate on this issue. The Republic of the Marshall Islands took the earliest opportunity to sign this important Treaty, and we are now working towards ratifying it. Our hope is that all States will

join in signing and ratifying the Treaty as soon as possible, to facilitate its earliest implementation.

In 1995 the Marshall Islands, together with Samoa and the Solomon Islands, brought to the International Court of Justice the question of the legality of nuclear weapons and their use. We would like to recall the Advisory Opinion rendered by the ICJ on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, which recognized that all members of the international community had an obligation to pursue in good faith, and bring to a conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We believe that efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament should be directed towards a convention prohibiting the production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons. Such a convention would need to begin by involving all States concerned in meaningful negotiations with a view to early further significant reductions of nuclear stockpiles. This would be the first step towards the ultimate elimination of these weapons.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands fully believes that accelerated work on a cut-off treaty on fissile materials is required. We have in the past supported this initiative, and are heartened to see that so many influential countries have taken the floor on this issue. This would be a significant advance, if successful.

Our country, as a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), notes the report on the work of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference, and we would like to draw attention to the omission of the Marshall Islands position paper from the report. We hope that the paper will be made available to interested delegations by the secretariat.

Other issues lie before this Committee as well. The Marshall Islands realizes that others face dangers to their survival from another invisible threat. The threat from anti-personnel landmines is very real for many countries and communities. These weapons are silent until discovered, and, as is well known, the discoverer is usually not a soldier at war, but in most cases an innocent victim — usually a child playing or a mother working in a field. The Marshall Islands, on the basis of our region's longstanding interest in disarmament matters, welcomes the recent international developments in the campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines. It is our hope that all nations will work towards embracing the effort to ban this weapon to prevent the killing and maiming of innocent children. Although we do not have, nor do we intend to acquire, such weapons, we will look into signing the treaty.

It is our belief that transparency of armaments is an effective measure in confidence-building and security among States. The United Nations Register eases fears of neighbours who have tense relations within their regions. The Marshall Islands thinks that for the successful operation of this Register all States must comply with the reporting, and we hope to see universal application to the Register in the near future. We feel that through our own submissions we are contributing towards the openness which we all seek in our international relations. And I am sure that most members are aware that the Marshall Islands is one of the few countries in the world that does not have any armed forces, beyond our national police and fisheries patrols. We are doing our best to cooperate in the promotion of global security and mutual cooperation for all States, and we would hope to see an equally supportive attitude from our colleagues in the Committee.

The Marshall Islands would like to take this opportunity to note the hard work of the non-governmental organizations that have dedicated themselves to disarmament. Their efforts to inform the public at large maintain an awareness of the issues and aid in our pursuit of a more peaceful society.

In conclusion, it is our view that an important step within the United Nations reform process has been made recently by the Secretary-General. The reorganization of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, and its elevation within the Organization as the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation, is an important step in strengthening and maintaining this vital United Nations component. It is our hope that this renewed recognition of the importance of disarmament will assist in bringing about the goal of global disarmament in all its aspects. All efforts that will focus and revitalize the global community's awareness of the importance of disarmament are welcome, and this will only help to realize this goal.

Mr. Kharchenko (Ukraine): The joint efforts by the world community aimed at reducing and eliminating entire categories of weapons, including weapons of mass destruction, are among the most significant international commitments of our time. Our delegation highly appreciates the opportunity to address this important forum and to present the position of Ukraine on a number of important issues related to arms control and disarmament.

I should like to begin by fully endorsing the belief, already expressed here, that nuclear weapons must not become a natural or inevitable feature of our world. Nor should they be regarded as the principal security asset any longer. In Ukraine's view, the world's security architecture cannot be considered as stable as long as there still exists a reliance on nuclear weapons.

Ukraine is convinced that it has made the right choice in respect of its non-nuclear status, and urges other States, primarily the nuclear-weapon States, to do likewise and make every effort to ensure nuclear weapons are removed from the face of our planet at the earliest possible opportunity, and forever.

Ukraine is consistently and faithfully carrying out its obligations under the START Treaty. Last month, year-long negotiations on Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty Succession and on the demarcation between strategic and theatre anti-missile defences resulted in the signing of important agreements. These arrangements, jointly worked out by Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, contribute to the strengthening of world stability.

Our State has put forward a global appeal, "The 21st Century World Without Nuclear Weapons", and we believe that the attainment of this lofty goal could be best served by developing a programme of complete nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. At the same time, there is a number of relevant steps that can be taken immediately, including taking nuclear forces off alert, removing warheads from delivery vehicles, ending the deployment of non-strategic nuclear weapons, banning all nuclear testing and initiating negotiations to further reduce the nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia.

We welcome prospects for launching the START III negotiations following the expected ratification of START II by Russia.

Last year was of special significance, due to the completion of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We welcome the fact that the language of this Treaty elaborated at the Conference on Disarmament was approved by the signature of more than 140 States. Regrettably, of this number, the signatures of three States whose participation in the CTBT is a prerequisite for its entry into force are still missing. In view of the fact that conditions for its entry into force are not subject to revision, we have to consider seriously a set of measures to provide for the timely implementation of the Treaty, since it is not impossible that a technologically perfect, though expensive, CTBT verification system will be established and ready to function while the Treaty itself is still not operational. We hope that those States that have not yet signed the Treaty and are thus delaying its implementation will reconsider their position. One cannot strive for a nuclear-weapon-free world while rejecting the CTBT.

There is still a need for the conclusion of a multilateral agreement prohibiting the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, even though four nuclear-weapon States have announced the unilateral cessation of such production. Nuclear forces have been actively reduced recently, and as a result of the dismantlement of nuclear warheads the amount of nuclear fissile materials which might be reused for military purposes is steadily growing. The storage sites of these materials are a permanent source of environmental and terrorist threat to all nations of the world. For this reason, we believe that the scope of the cut-off treaty should not be limited to a ban on their production, but the possibility of reducing stockpiles should be considered as well.

Accordingly, the title of a future agreement might be "Convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices and on the reduction of their existing stockpiles". Worded thus, such an item on the Conference on Disarmament's programme of work would prove, from the very beginning, that a forthcoming instrument is intended to make a valuable contribution to nuclear disarmament. In our view, this would undoubtedly increase the number of States wishing to start negotiations on this item and thus bring us closer to consensus. The scope of the reduction of these materials has to be at the centre of future negotiations on this issue. From Ukraine's point of view, the provisions of a future agreement must envisage a declaration of existing plutonium and highly enriched uranium stocks. To assure universality of the declarations, they might not necessarily indicate the purpose of stockpiling.

It would also be useful to establish the time-frames and rates of reduction of excessive stocks for each country concerned. The best solution would be a decision on the total elimination of the reprocessing of fissile materials for non-military purposes. The verification procedure for this agreement should be non-discriminatory and based on the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. Its main objective would be to monitor the declared fissile material production facilities or those capable of such activity for the

purposes of nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. At the same time, the procedures and technical means of verification should be adequate to enable detection of undeclared facilities producing fissile materials for prohibited purposes.

Finally, the future agreement would need to be ratified by all nuclear-weapon and threshold States. Therefore, we have to obtain their support for the early consideration of the cut-off issue and secure their constructive cooperation in the course of negotiations.

Speaking on the cut-off issue brings us closer to discussing the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament. These and other important priorities have already been identified by the delegations in Geneva. Ukraine would like to see next year's programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament contain both a ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament.

The year 1997 has witnessed a major event in the field of the prohibition of chemical weapons. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) entered into force and the international community now has the chance to get rid of such weapons in the course of the next decades. The Convention is recognized as the first truly verifiable global disarmament accord, with a unique, comprehensive and effective verification regime covering both military and industrial facilities. We would like to applaud the States that have already placed their ratification instrument in the custody of the depositary of the CWC — the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Ukraine, as a State that does not possess chemical weapons, has accelerated its preparation for the ratification of the Convention and hopes to join the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons as soon as possible. We are sure that the recent visit of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Mr. Bustani, to Ukraine can provide good impetus to our progress in this matter.

The implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) will continue to be under scrutiny at the new negotiating body for setting up a verification regime. Delegations in Geneva have achieved some positive results in improving and strengthening the BWC. Ukraine annually submits the required data in the spirit of the Convention's improved confidence-building measures. Ukrainian experts take an active part in the negotiating process, and we prepared some recommendations for a number of potential verification measures to strengthen the efficiency and improve the implementation of the Convention.

We welcome the successful outcome of the fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the BWC, held at the end of last year, and we will actively participate in the work of the Ad Hoc Group to consider appropriate measures, including a possible verification regime to be defined in a legally binding document.

The attention of the world community is concentrating more and more on the need to solve an acute international humanitarian problem caused by the worldwide use of antipersonnel landmines. This insidious type of conventional arms is — as has been strikingly demonstrated in recent years — fraught with danger for the civilian population in conflict zones for years and even decades after the end of hostilities.

The first Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Certain Conventional Weapons, held in 1995-1996, made an important achievement by adopting the amended Protocol II to the Convention, which imposes rigorous restrictions or prohibitions on the use of specific types of anti-personnel landmines. In the course of that Review Conference, however, the need for a decisive breakthrough became evident. This understanding is embodied in General Assembly resolution 51/45 S, "An international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines", adopted with 155 votes in favour and none against. In the meantime, the Ottawa process, supported by a growing number of States, has gained strong momentum. We share the noble aspirations of the Ottawa process and commend the results of the international meetings held in Vienna in February and in Bonn in April, as well as the conferences in Brussels in May and in Oslo in September.

There is no doubt, however, that so authoritative a forum as the Conference on Disarmament is capable of playing, and must play, an important role in negotiations on a total ban of anti-personnel landmines. Therefore, Ukraine shares the view of many other States that the Conference on Disarmament is the best place for such talks. Even now the Conference on Disarmament still has a window of opportunity to prove its usefulness for solving problems requiring out-of-the-ordinary approaches.

In this respect, the following approach seems to us to be realistic: without competing with the Ottawa process, the Conference on Disarmament might complement it by negotiating a comprehensive multilateral international agreement to ban the production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. We are convinced that the States

supporting such an agreement would include those which are not yet ready to sign the Oslo Convention.

The current year will undoubtedly occupy an important place in the history of conventional arms control on the European continent. It is the year when the negotiation process began on the adaptation of the Vienna Document-94 and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), two basic documents in the sphere of conventional arms control. The final aim of the adaptation process is to bring these documents into conformity with the present military and political realities in Europe, and to increase their efficiency.

Ukraine fully supports the idea of adaptation of the Vienna Document-94 and preparation of its next version, but at the same time shares the opinion that the process of adaptation must be gradual and well-considered. To our mind, the adapted Vienna Document should cover new spheres of military activities, in particular those related to naval forces, and include additional regional and bilateral confidence-building measures. Ukraine's initiative on confidence-building and security measures in the naval sphere on the Black Sea, and our negotiations with some States with the aim of concluding separate bilateral agreements on additional confidence-building measures in the military sphere, should be seen in this context.

It is also necessary to mention the conclusion of the important political treaty between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, and the signing of basic agreements on the division of the Black Sea fleet. The countries of the region recognize them as a significant contribution to strengthening European security.

Ukraine also attaches special importance to the successful conclusion of the CFE adaptation process. It is quite natural that, at the present stage of negotiations, the differences between States parties to the Treaty on certain adaptation issues still remain. This may be explained by each State's aspiration to see the adapted Treaty reflect its national interests to the greatest possible extent. At the same time, we are convinced it is possible to reach a compromise on the above issues in the near future. We are also sure that in the adapted Treaty the confrontation between blocs inherited from the cold war will finally be put to an end and the concentration of conventional armed forces in the zone to which the Treaty applies will be considerably decreased. That will be another significant step towards strengthening confidence and security on the European continent.

The Ukraine's delegation believes that the commitment of all delegations in this Committee to move forward promptly and decisively will enable us to resolve the outstanding issues on our agenda.

Mr. Rodrigue (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): I should like to join previous speakers in most warmly congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, upon your election and in wishing you success as you guide our work.

While we associate ourselves with the statement made on behalf of the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), to which Haiti belongs, my delegation would like to make its own contribution to the debate on the question of disarmament, which is of great importance to us.

Since the end of the cold war the international community has made significant achievements in its tireless efforts to maintain world peace and security. Thanks to the climate of understanding and cooperation in relations between the two super-Powers, considerable progress has been made in disarmament and arms control.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the keystone of the world nuclear non-proliferation regime, has been indefinitely extended, and its review process has been strengthened.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has finally been negotiated, and is enjoying growing support, as evinced by the 150 signatures in only a year.

The concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which originated in Latin America and the Caribbean with the Treaty of Tlatelolco, has spread to the extent that it now encompasses 114 countries and covers more than half of the Earth.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has come into effect, and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is now the subject of negotiations to strengthen its verification system.

A Convention to ban the use, manufacture, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines was adopted last month in Oslo and will be opened for signature in December in Ottowa.

Other multilateral or bilateral measures, as well as unilateral initiatives, have been taken in recent years, making it possible to reduce the significant stockpiles of

weapons accumulated during the unbridled arms race and to strengthen international security.

While we welcome these encouraging developments, my delegation wishes to draw attention to the fact that we are still far from achieving the international community's objective of general and complete disarmament. Though it has lessened over time, with the help of international legal instruments, the risk posed by weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear weapons in particular, remains, given the vast arsenals that still exist. The international community and the States concerned must make a greater effort to eliminate such weapons, which as long as they exist threaten humanity's very survival.

While the international community welcomes the progress made with regard to weapons of mass destruction, it must be admitted that very little has been done so far to halt the proliferation of conventional weapons, even though their role in the armed conflicts and urban violence that rage throughout the world is acknowledged. These weapons foment civil wars, contribute to the political destabilization of States and influence the lives of individuals. They threaten the new democracies whose structures are still fragile.

Even more alarming is the abundance of these weapons in the world market, the ease with which they can be acquired and the direct connection between them and terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. The circulation of and illicit traffic in small-calibre weapons is therefore a matter of great concern.

For my country, which less than three years ago took the courageous decision to dissolve its army and set up in its place a civil police force to ensure public security, the proliferation of small arms in our society is a major problem. This phenomenon is connected to a rising crime rate, and presents a formidable challenge to still young, inexperienced and under-equipped force.

In this connection, my delegation welcomes the establishment of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, and would like to thank it for its report on this subject. This is the first concrete step taken by the international community to control this ever-worsening problem.

Likewise, the efforts made in our region upon the initiative of Mexico to conclude an inter-American convention against the manufacture of and illegal traffic in firearms, ammunition, explosives and similar *matériel* are encouraging and have the support of my country.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that peace and security do not depend solely upon arms reduction. Economic and social development are also factors for peace and stability. It is time Governments understood that it is in their interest to invest in improving living standards, rather than in producing and acquiring sophisticated weapons.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.